

24th Islamic Da'wa Conference

A Correction Of Misunderstandings Found In Non-Arabic Sources Upon The Movement Of Sheikh Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahhab

Presented by
Dr. Suhaib Hasan
(London)

endeavoured to refute all the doubts which were raised in the books in question in the light of the writings of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab and all the scholars who defended him at home and abroad.

In the confines of this paper it was not possible to cover all the different ramifications of this extensive subject, so the author hopes that readers will accept his apologies for any shortcomings (unintentional as they are) and will pray for him for Allah's guidance and rewards if they benefit from this humble effort.

Indeed Allah is the One Who Guides to the Right Way.

1

We begin this discussion with writings from the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. This work is considered to be among the oldest and most exhaustive reference works to discuss religion in the English language. William Margoliouth, author of the chapter on "Wahhabism", writes that Wahhabis differ from Ahl us Sunnah wal Jama'ah in ten areas:

- 1- They attribute to Allah physical characteristics such as a Face and Hands
- 2- Reasoning has no place in religious questions, which must be settled solely on tradition
- 3- Consensus is rejected
- 4- Analogy is rejected
- 5- The Imam's of Madhahib have no authority and those who follow them are not Muslims
- 6- Those who do not join them (the "Wahhabis") are also not Muslims
- 7- Neither the Prophet (SAS) nor a saint will be allowed to intercede
- 8- Visiting the graves is prohibited
- 9- To take an oath in the name of other than Allah (SWT) is prohibited
- 10- To offer an vow for other than Allah (SWT) and to slaughter besides the graves in the names of the saints are not allowed

However he acknowledges that there is a doubt concerning the authenticity of point no.5 which has been attributed to Wahhabism, as they are the followers of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, himself one of the four Imams. Morgoliouth ends his article with the observation that Imam Ahmad ash Shaheed (d. 1831) introduced Wahhabism to India following a

pilgrimage to Makkah in 1824¹. What is strange is that an eminent orientalist like W. Morgoliouth finds plenty of quotations from the opponents of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, yet nothing to defend him except for point no. 5.

So let us remedy this by discussing the list and including our refutation where necessary.

- 1- The belief of Sheikh Ibn Al Wahhab regarding the Attributes of Allah is the same belief of the Salaf, our pious predecessors. They said that Allah Almighty has all the attributes which He has declared for Himself. These include Attributes related to his own self, such as the Face, Hands and Eye, and Attributes of action, such as His Pleasure, Anger, Being on the Throne and Descending from it. They accept all such descriptions without Takyeeef (asking how they happen), Ta'teel (negating them altogether) or Tashbeeh (anthropomorphic analogy). The basis of this belief is the statement of Allah,
"Nothing is similar unto Him, and He Listens and Sees." ²

Just as Allah's Attributes do not resemble in any way the attributes of human beings, so His Being does not resemble the being of humans.

- 2- The criticism that the followers of Sheikh Muhammad ibn al Wahhab have no regard for intellectual reasoning is a total fabrication. What we do say is that reason cannot be independent of revelation. If we take the analogy of the eye and light, we know that the eye needs light to function. This can be natural light from the sun, moon or stars, or artificial light. In the same way, the human intellect is enlightened by and functions within divine revelation, which makes it trustworthy. If it lacks divine revelation, it will go astray in the darkness of ignorance. Human intellect varies and differs; the reasoning of a thinker will be different from the reasoning of a philosopher; the reasoning of a historian will be different from the reasoning of a mathematician.
- 3- They have claimed that the Wahhabis rejected the concept of Ijma' – Consensus. This too is untrue. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal considered the true Ijma' to be that of the Companions. The time of the Companions is a specific period, known for its beginning and end. The Companions witnessed revelation and accepted the message of the Messenger of Allah at first-hand.

Imam Muhammad Abu Zahra said in this issue that Ijma' is of two types: Ijma' on the basic obligatory actions, which is recognised by all. And Ijma' on other rulings of Shariah, such as fighting apostates. A difference of opinion regarding the second type has been attributed to Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal. Some scholars have reported the following from him:

“Any person who claims the existence of Ijma' is a liar.”

Imam Ibn al Qayyim has said, “The person who claims Ijma' has lied,” and he did not like giving preference to Ijma' over an authentic Hadith.

Abdullah, son of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, said, “I heard my father say, ‘Whenever a man claims al Ijma', he is a liar. It may have been the case that difference of opinion occurred among the people, but he did not know about it. At the most he should say: We do not know anyone who opposed.’”

This statement shows that Imam Ahmad did not deny the principle of Ijma', but denied knowledge of its occurrence after the period of the Sahabah.³

- 4- It is also claimed that Sheikh Muhammad ibn al Wahhab denied Qiyas (analogy). This is incorrect as the Sheikh held the same opinion about this subject as the Hanbali School in general. Imam Abu Zahra said, “It is reported from Ahmad that one cannot be free of Qiyas as it was adopted by the Sahabah.”

Once Imam Ahmad had established this principle, the Hanbali school accepted it widely. Qiyas was used whenever a new situation arose for which they could not find a reference from the Hadith or sayings of the Sahabah.⁴

- 5- The allegation that leaders of other mazahib have no authority and their followers are not Muslims, and that...
- 6- ...anyone who does not join the Wahhabi movement is a Kafir.

Both the above allegations are clear fabrications. Sheikh Abdullah, son of Sheikh Muhammad ibn al Wahhab, wrote a treatise after he entered Makkah victoriously with Prince Saud bin Abdul Aziz on Saturday 8th Muharram 1218 AH. In this he wrote,

“Our mazhab in the principle of the deen is the deen of Ahl ul Sunnah wal Jama’ah. Our way is the way of the Salaf, the pious predecessors. Our branch of mazhab is that of Ahmad bin Hanbal, but we do not reject anyone who follows any of the four Imams excluding other mazahib which are not fully regulated.”

He continues, “Those people who invent lies against us to conceal the truth and deceive the people; they make the people believe we degrade the status of the Prophet (SAS), we teach he has no intercession and visiting him is not recommended; we do not depend on the sayings of the ulama, we declare the people in general to be kafirs, we stop people sending salutations on the Messenger of Allah (SAS), and we do not recognise the rights of Ahl ul Bayt – to all these allegations our answer is,

‘May Allah be glorified, this is indeed a great lie.’”

Therefore anyone who attributes any of these beliefs to us has attributed a lie.⁵

- 7- The claim that Sheikh ibn al Wahhab believed there is no intercession on the part of a prophet or saint. Our reply is that the author of the article was obviously ignorant of the difference between two types of Shafa’a (intercession). The first contains Shirk, and this was rejected by Sheikh ibn al Wahhab. The second which was approved by him, is the Intercession performed only with permission from Allah on the Day of Judgement, by a being chosen by Allah for this honour⁶. If the critics of Wahhabism mean by this that the Sheikh has forbidden Al Waseelah through prophets and saints, our reply is that most people do not understand the opinions of both Sheikh ibn al Wahhab and Imam ibn Hanbal on this issue and have levelled false charges against them.

Imam ibn Taymiyyah said that Imam Ahmad has been reported in the “Rituals of Al Marwazi” as to how to achieve Waseelah of the Prophet (SAS) through his du’a. But there are others who did not approve of it. Tawassul achieved through faith in the Prophet (SAS), through love for him, through following him and through obeying him is acceptable to both parties. But Tawassul through the person of the Prophet (SAS) is a contentious issue, and wherever a dispute arises, it should be referred back to Allah and His Messenger.⁷

- 8- The claim that Wahhabis declare the visiting of the graves and tombs to be haram will be discussed later, alongside the writings of Ignaz Goldziher.
- 9- They claim that Wahhabis declare haram the taking of oaths with anyone other than Allah. This is indeed true as it is proven by authentic ahadith. Umar bin al Khattab narrated that the Prophet (SAS) said, "Anyone who swears by any other than Allah has committed Shirk." This is reported by At Tirmidhi who declared it as *hadith hasan*. It was also declared *Sahih* by Al Hakim.
- Ibn Mas'ud said, "It is preferable to me to swear by Allah when lying than to swear by other than Allah when speaking the truth."⁸
- 10- It is also claimed that Sheikh ibn al Wahhab believes that vows in the name of others than Allah is haram, and that meat slaughtered besides graves in the name of saints is also haram. This is perfectly true, as it is from the *deen* of Allah, and every Muslim should believe it as long as he believes in Allah and His Messenger. In his great book "*Kitab al Tawhid*", Sheikh ibn al Wahhab includes a chapter under the title, "No slaughtering should be offered for Allah in a place where slaughtering is offered for beings other than Allah." His next chapter title is, "To vow in the name of someone other than Allah is Shirk." Both chapters contain extensive proofs from the Qur'an and Sunnah to support these statements.

2

We now come to the writings of the German orientalist Ignaz Goldziher in "*Muslim Studies*". This appeared in two volumes in German in 1889 and was translated into English in 1967. The author devoted a long chapter of 96 pages to the subject of "*Veneration of Saints in Islam*". He discusses at great length the excessive attribution of miracles to saints whether living or dead, by Muslims. He also gives a wealth of examples of sanctifying graves and tombs from Islamic literature and general Muslim practice. His aim is to show that there is no difference between Christians and Muslims in the veneration of saints. Pointing to Qur'anic verses and Hadith which refute such practices, he comments,

"After all this there is no need to explain in detail that within Islam in its original form there was no room for the veneration of saints as it so largely developed later. The Koran itself polemizes directly against the

reverence of saints in other religions which consider their *ahbar* and *ruhban* as *arbab*, divine masters (Sura 9:31)”

He then quotes Karl Hase regarding the saint cult and says,

“That it ‘satisfies within a monotheistic religion a polytheistic need to fill the enormous gap between men and their god,’”⁹

After the author has included numerous examples of reverence of saints by the general Muslim public and the visiting of graves and tombs for praying for one’s needs, he also gives examples of scholars who objected to such forms of Shirk. He quotes the impenetrable stance of Imam ibn Taymiyya in the issue of Tawassul and journeying to places other than the three Mosques. He then says,

“This shows that Wahhabism had its forerunners and that it only expressed in a corporate way what was also earlier the inner conviction of old traditional Muslims. From this point of view it would be of great interest for the cultural and religious history of Islam to collect all pre-Wahhabi manifestations of a monotheistic reaction in Islam against pagan survivals which it inherited from paganism or which infiltrated from outside, and to relate these manifestations to the surroundings which gave them rise. Apart from the older manifestations just mentioned it would be possible to list one which can probably be counted the latest: the scene which took place six decades before the beginning of the Wahhabite movement in 1711 in the Mu’ayyad mosque at Cairo. One evening in Ramadan the catechism of Birgevi was being interpreted when a youth – he is called a Rumi – ascended the pulpit and preached passionately against the ever increasing cult of saints and graves, branding this degenerate form of Islamic worship as idolatry. He said, ‘Who has seen the hidden tablet of fate? Not even the prophet himself. All these graves of saints must be destroyed, those who kiss the coffins are infidels, the convents of the Mewlewi and Bektashi must be demolished, the dervishes should study rather than dance.’ The zealous youth, who interpreted the *fatwa* issued against him in a derisive manner and who repeated his provocative speeches for several evenings, disappeared mysteriously from Cairo. The ‘*ulama*’ do not cease to decorate the graves of their saints and to confirm the people in their disbelief in this complete nonsense.”¹⁰

The objective behind recording the above quotations is to show that this German author is enough proof to vindicate the Wahhabi stance against

visiting tombs and supplicating to the dead, as the religion of Islam has never allowed such practices. A brief glimpse of Sheikh ibn al Wahhab's book "Issues of pre-Islamic era" is enough to show the Messenger of Allah (SAS) opposed the practices of Jahiliyya. The book contains some interesting chapters:

- To take graves of past people as places of worship
- To take impressions/remains of the Prophet (SAS) as Mosques
- To light lamps on graves
- To declare graves as Eid
- Offering sacrifices besides graves
- To take blessings from people who were held sacred

In these chapters he shows through ahadith that the people of Jahiliyya took these matters from the Ahl ul Kitab: the Jews and Christians. Islam came to destroy all such practices, but they were re-introduced among the Muslim masses, so there was a need to purify Islam from such practices anew.

Here, let us quote a very clear reply by Sultan Abdul Aziz bin Abdur Rahman Al-Saud to the deputation which came from India in 1924, asking him to reconstruct the tombs on the graves. He said to them,

"We are concerned with the renovation of the sacred places and to keep them in a dignified and respectable manner. As for reconstructing them, we can only act in accordance with the Islamic Shariah. It is our duty to implement the rulings of the Shariah in the sacred places as reported by the pious ancestors and the four Imams. I am ready to rebuild them with gold and silver if the scholars of the Ummah agree to say that building them is an obligation." ¹¹

However, Goldziher attributes the sanctity of the Black Stone among the Muslims to a remnant of idolatory. We refute this by simply quoting Syyedina Umar bin al Khattab, who said when kissing it,

"I know that you are a stone which does not benefit nor harm. But had I not seen the Messenger of Allah kissing you, I would not have kissed you." ¹²

Similarly, Goldziher's remarks about *bid'a* are not just:

"The exaggerated, fanatical attitude to the Sunnah, even in quite trivial matters, is matched by a similar fanaticism towards *bid'a*. Modern Wahhabism follows the pattern of earlier times in striving to brand as *bid'a* not only anything contrary to the spirit of the Sunnah but also everything that cannot be proved to be in it. It is known that the ultra-conservative

opposed every novelty, the use of coffee and tobacco, as well as printing, coming under this heading. Muslim theologians even today are not entirely reconciled to the use of knife and fork.”¹³

It is an established fact that declaring something to be bid'a is not dependent upon the moods of people but on established principles. The Prophet (SAS) said,

“Anyone who innovates in this matter of ours something which is not from it will have it rejected.”¹⁴

He also said, “The one who practices something not in accordance with our matter will have it rejected.”¹⁵

So the whole issue is related to the worldly matters and not the religious ones. It is moreover regulated with a number of conditions which make it quite difficult to label something Bid'a easily, contrary to what the German orientalist claimed and falsely attributed to Wahhabism.

3

Religions in the Middle East: A. J. Arberry

Arberry's comments on the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and on the movement begun by Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab are generally acceptable. However, his final thoughts on Wahhabism need to be discussed. He says,

“How far can Wahhabism go along the path of adjustment without losing its essential character? Much depends on the quality of leadership and much also depends on the generality of Wahhabis. Borrowing and adaptation from various sources both Eastern and Western, will go on but if the Wahhabis can hold fast to their fundamental beliefs, they stand a good chance of preserving the State which their predecessors in the faith laboured to build.”¹⁶

Arberry also discusses the issue of whether Syyed Ahmad Ash Shaheed (1786-1831) had been favourably impressed by Wahhabism during his Hajj journey. Arberry comments that this notion was first raised by W. W. Hunter in “Indian Mussulmans”, but was refuted by Syyed Abdul Barri in “The politics of Syed Ahmad Barelwi” and by Syed Mahmud Hussain in “History of the freedom movements”. Arberry concludes that the Ahl ul

Hadith movement was also accused of Wahhabism towards the end of the 19th Century. Our response to these comments is that the new era of Saudi rule began at the beginning of the 20th Century, when its leadership exerted their efforts to unite all the areas of the Arabian peninsula, and succeeded having been blessed with Allah's Help. The Kingdom established good relations with its neighbours and it is a fact of history that the Kingdom's friends among the Arab states in particular and the Muslim countries in general have always outnumbered its enemies and critics.

It is also another fact of history that the Kingdom's strong grip on the dogma of Tawheed (Oneness of Allah) and their rejection of all signs of Shirk and superstitions is still as strong today as it was when the reformatory movement of the Sheikh began two hundred years ago. The secret of success lies in this, with the will of Allah.

Arberry's comments that Syed Ahmad Shaheed was impressed by Wahhabism have been mentioned by others such as Morgoliouth. The famous author Mas'ud Alam An Nadawi has commented on this, saying, "And similarly the renewal of the movement of Islam and Imamate which began in India was so similar to the movement of Najd that even the supporters of the movements believed both movements to be the same".

The similarities are not surprising since the roots of both movements lie in the Qur'an and Sunnah. However, the movements do have distinctly different methods of da'wah and work, despite agreeing in principle. The movement of renewing Jihad which was established by Syed Ahmad Shaheed (d. 1246 AH) and Sheikh Ismail Ash Shaheed (d. 1246) was not affected by the movement of Najd¹⁷. The Ahl ul Hadith in India were also labelled as Wahhabis because they too fought to refute all signs of Shirk, innovations and superstitions from the Muslims.

4

Encyclopaedia Britannica: The movement of Wahhabism under Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab

The author of the article claims that,

"Having completed his formal education in the holy city of Medina, in Arabia, 'Abd al-Wahhab lived abroad for many years. He taught for four years in Basra, Iraq and in Baghdad married an affluent woman whose property he inherited when she died. In 1736 in Iran he began to teach

against what he considered to be the extreme ideas of various exponents of Sufi doctrines.”¹⁸

The article ends with a surprisingly refreshing praise of Sheikh ibn al Wahhab and comments that his followers preferred the title of “Muwahhidoon”. The term “Wahhabis” was a derogatory label used by their opponents.

The lies concerning the Sheikh’s travels have been attributed to Morgoliouth. In his article in the “Encyclopaedia of Islam”, Morgoliouth includes the fabrication that the Sheikh married a wealthy lady in Baghdad from whom he inherited two thousand.

He then travelled to Kurdistan, Hamdan, Qum and Isfahan. Other writers such as Palgrave, Zwemmer and Briggs in his “Brief history of the Wahhabis” have also claimed that the Sheikh travelled beyond Baghdad and Damascus. But these claims are untrue, as there is no evidence of the Sheikh travelling beyond Basrah to Baghdad, Syria or Egypt.¹⁹

5

Ameer Ali: “The Spirit of Islam”

The author was a member of the Judicial Committee of His Majesty’s Privy Council in the early 20th Century, i.e. during the days of British colonial rule in India. He writes,

“In Najd, under the rule of the Wahabis, who have been called the Covenanters of Islam, laggards were whipped into the mosque. And today under Ibn Saud, his followers who designate themselves *Ikhwan*, or ‘Brothers in faith’, pursue the same method for enforcing the observance of religious rites. Prayers *bil-jama’at* as being obligatory (*farz’ain*) naturally made the presence of the Imam obligatory.”²⁰

Discussing the Azariqa, a faction of the Khawarij, he says,

“Of these the *Azarika* are the most fanatical, exclusive, and narrow. According to them, every sect besides their own is doomed to perdition, and ought to be forcibly converted or ruthlessly destroyed. No mercy ought to be shown to any infidel or *Mushrik* (an expansive term, including Muslims, Christians and Jews). To them every sin is of the same degree: murder, fornication, intoxication, smoking, all are damning offences against religion.

Whilst other Muslims, Shiah as well as Sunni, hold that every child is born into the world in the faith of Islam, and remains so until perverted by education, the Azraki declares that the child of an infidel is an infidel. The orthodox Christian maintains that every child who is not baptized is doomed to perdition: the Khariji, like the Christian, declares that every child who has not pronounced the formula of faith is beyond the pale of salvation. The Azarika were destroyed by Hajjaj ibn Yusuf; but their sanguinary, fierce, and merciless doctrines found expression nine centuries later in Wahabism.”²¹

He then says,

“The Wahabis have been depicted in rather favourable colours by Mr. Palgrave, in his *Travels in Central Arabia*, but, in fact, they are the direct descendants of the *Azarika*, who after their defeat by Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, had taken refuge in the recesses of Central Arabia. Abdul Wahab’s doctrines bear the closest resemblance to those held so fiercely by the followers of Nafe ibn al-Azrak. Like them, the Wahabis designate all other Muslims as unbelievers, and permit their despoilment and enslavement. However commendable their revolt against the anthropolatrous usages in vogue among the modern Muslims, their views of religion and divine government, like those of the Ikhwan in the present day in Najd, are intensely morose and Calvinistic²², and in absolute conflict with progress and development.”²³

Our response to these claims is as follows:

1. There is no disagreement among the different mazahib of Islam regarding obligatory prayers. But there are some minor differences regarding the duty of the man to offer these prayers in a Masjid. Some held that it is obligatory if he is in the vicinity of a Masjid and hears the adhan, but others held it as a confirmed Sunnah. Muslim societies in general took it for granted that their men would attend the Masjid for prayer after hearing the adhan, and it was only in very recent times that laxity developed among some people. Al Ikhwan introduced a disciplinary punishment for those who were lazy in attending congregational prayers in order to counteract the lethargy that was developing. But this punishment was never needed on a large scale; in Saudi Arabia today, for example, an observer will notice people flocking to the Masajid at times of prayer, despite the absence of any forms of punishment for not doing so.

2. The treatise of Sheikh Hamad bin Naasir bin Uthman Ma'mari An Najdi (d. 1225 AH) gives permission to fight those who do not pray out of laziness. He reports the consensus of all the Imams except Az Zuhri. And this is the mazhab of the people known as Hanbalis. For the people of Najd, anyone who abandons prayer voluntarily is regarded a Kafir.²⁴

3. Ameer Ali's comments about the alleged resemblance between the Wahhabis and the Khawarij are not new. Zaini Dahlan also took all the ahadith pertaining to the Khawarij and applied them to the Wahhabis in his books "Al Durrar al Sunniya" and "Al Futuhat al Islamiyya".²⁵
 Ameer Ali's comments regarding the resemblance between the Wahhabis and the Khawarij, especially the Azariqa, shows his deep ignorance of the beliefs of Sheikh Ibn Abdul Wahhab, which were simply a renewal of the pure teachings of the Salaf. Let us hear the evidence of the mazhab of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab.
 - i) The Khawarij declare any individual who commits a major sin to be a Kafir. The Sheikh will only declare someone to be a Kafir if the consensus of the entire Muslim ummah is that he is a Kafir, and if the evidence has been made clear to him. The Sheikh did not declare someone a Kafir if the evidence had not been presented to the wrongdoer. He says concerning people who commit the major sin of drinking alcohol,
 "If these people insist on declaring something which is haram to be halal, they are to be labelled Kuffar. But if they believe them to be haram but still partake of them, they are to be flogged. Our pious predecessors did not declare people to be Kuffar for taking the haram to be halal until the truth was made clear to these people. If they persisted despite the evidence, they could then be labelled Kuffar."²⁶

 - ii) The Khawarij declared it halal to fight other factions if they had rebelled. The Sheikh said, "As far as fighting is concerned, we do not fight anyone except to defend our lives and honour. These people have invaded us in our own lands, and so have left no possible alternative. We may fight some of them for what they have done for us. The Qur'an advises us, "The recompense for an evil is a similar evil."
 And we can fight those who openly abuse the deen of our Prophet (SAS) after recognising it."²⁷

- iii) The Khawarij were known for their rebellion against Muslim leaders. They killed Syyedina Ali, May Allah be pleased with him, one of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. In "The Salafi beliefs of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab", the author says,

"He believes in the obligation to listen to and obey the Imams of the Muslims, whether they are sinful or pious, as long as they do not ask the people to disobey Allah. If a man takes the Caliphate and the people gather round him, or he dominates them with a sword until he becomes a Caliph, then obedience to him is incumbent and rebellion against him is haram." ²⁸

- iv) One of the distinctive characteristics of the Azariqa is their belief that all the children of Kuffar are also Kuffar. For the belief of the Ahl us Sunnah wal Jama'ah and the followers of Sheikh Ibn Abdul Wahhab, we will record the religious verdict of the most prominent worker in da'wah of our times, Allamah Sheikh Ibn Abdul Aziz bin Baz, may Allah have Mercy upon him: "According to one saying of the scholars, The man to whom da'wah did not reach, either because he was away from Islam and the Muslims, or because he attained majority when he was mad, or the children of Kuffar who die in childhood, all these people will be put to a trial on the Day of Judgement. Those who respond correctly to the trial will enter Al Jannah. Those who disobey will enter the Fire. And we seek safety from Allah, the Almighty."

Because of the many authentic ahadith on this issue, the correct opinion regarding the children of Kuffar who die before coming of age is that they will be in paradise. ²⁹

- v) Ameer Ali admits the revolt of Wahhabis against anthropomorphism. He registers his displeasure with their rule, but does not explain why this is so. The Saudi Kingdom took upon its shoulders the duty of implementing the religion of Allah and Islamic Shariah. Among the blessings of this rule are the comfort, safety, security, peace and stability enjoyed in all areas under its rule. It has modernised and advanced in technology rapidly. Had Ameer Ali lived longer, he would have witnessed himself the falseness of his predictions for the end of the last century. And Allah is the Accounter.

Humphrey's "Memoirs" ³⁰

This book was translated into Urdu in India and it was claimed by its publishers that Humphrey was an English spy whose duty was to spy on the Ottoman caliphate in the 18th Century. He went through training in adopting an Islamic identity and learning Arabic, and then travelled to Basra where he met Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, and a strong friendship developed between the two. The Publishers claim that these memoirs remained hidden until they fell into the hands of the Germans during World War II, who published it as a way of slandering the British government. It was translated into French, Arabic and Urdu.

A perusal of this book makes it abundantly clear that it is an imaginary fictional narrative, coined deliberately to discredit Sheikh ibn Abdul Wahhab and his followers by the British. Our evidence to prove the book is a concoction is twofold: historical evidence from its contents, and our fruitless search to find the original English version.

i) We began with a trip to the British Library's Rare Books Section, which contains books printed prior to 1975. There were 72 entries under Humphrey, but none related to our subject. We found one entry under Humphrey's Memoirs (printed 1734), but these were the memoirs of the Duke of Gloucester who recorded his relations with the ruling family of the time.

The publishers of the offending book had also given a number of alternative titles such as "Colonisation Ideal" and "The English spy in Islamic countries". Needless to say we found no such book, and neither did our search under 'spy' reveal anything useful. The advent of computers has made access to rare and remote books very easy, and we have been forced to conclude after an intensive search that no such book exists and that we have a fabricated translation published by the enemies of the Sheikh ibn Abdul Wahhab.

ii) Humphrey claims he travelled to Istanbul in 1710 at the age of 20. He returned to London and then travelled to Basrah in 1712 after a long sea journey lasting six months. This claim is irrational as sea travel between England and Gulf was not that long. He also claims to have met Shaikh At Tae, one of the Sheikhs of Basrah. He then met a carpenter of Iranian

origins called Abdul Riza with whom he began working, and there he met a young man who spoke Turkish, Persian and Arabic. He wore the garb of students and was known as Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab.³¹

The claim of this acquaintance is clearly false. Sheikh ibn Abdul Wahhab was born in 1703, attaining majority at the age of twelve when his father arranged his marriage. After travelling to the Hijaz for the Hajj, he returned to Najd and stayed with his father to study. He did not travel to seek knowledge until 1722 when he travelled to Makkah, Madina and Basrah. There is thus no possibility of the Sheikh and the fictional Humphrey meeting in Basrah as the dates do not correspond. And all the scholars who have researched the biography of the Sheikh have rejected claims that the Sheikh travelled to Turkey and Persia.³²

iii) The book claims that the Sheikh expressed a desire to travel to Istanbul, but was advised against it by Humphrey for fear of persecution from the Ottomans. He advised the Sheikh to travel to Isfahan instead, and the Sheikh did so. This too is a lie. Syyed Abdul Haleem al Jundi quotes in "Al Imam Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab – the victory of the Salafi method",

"I discussed this with Sheikh ibn Baz, who denied the journey to Kurdistan and Iran. Sheikh Ibn Baz told me he took this information from his Sheikhs, including the grandchildren of Sheikh Ibn Abdul Wahhab, and especially his own Sheikh, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim".³³

iv) Humphrey claims that the Sheikh declared his da'wah in 1143 AH. This is the only time he uses the hijrah calendar in his book. It also reveals his ignorance of historical facts, as the Sheikh returned to Huraymilah three years before the death of his father in 1153, and declared his da'wah after the death of his father.

v) There is yet more evidence that Humphrey was devoid of historical knowledge. Humphrey travelled to Istanbul in 1710, giving the ostensible reason that the British Empire was assigning great importance to its established colonies. The Empire was so vast it was said that the sun did not set within its boundaries. Although the British Isles were themselves relatively small, the extended territories including India, China and the Middle East were extensive and required careful governance. The Ministry for Colonies decided to recruit spies to gather information from the territories, and so Humphrey became involved.³⁴

It is historically inaccurate to place these events at the beginning of the 18th Century. India at the time was not a colony; the East India

Company began trading in the 17th Century but had no political hold until 1757 when Bengal was captured. It began expanding until the rule of the Company was transferred to direct rule from England in 1857. Therefore, there was no Indian colony in 1710. There was also no British colonial involvement in China at the time; Hong Kong did not fall to the British until the Treaty of 1898.

It is therefore clear that the inventor of the Memoirs has let his imagination run riot and abandon historical accuracy. He has set his story at the end of the 19th Century in the heyday of the British Empire, when the sun truly did not set on its colonies. But in doing so, he has exposed himself to be a writer of fiction, not fact.

vi) The author attributes many actions and words to the Sheikh which are at clear odds with the beliefs, teachings and distinctly Islamic character of the Sheikh. There is no need to discuss these filthy slanders in any detail, as the authenticity of the facts in the book has been proven to be false.

vii) In order to lend credibility to his 'memoirs', the author sprinkles the novel with stories of plots by the British government to disunite the Muslims; to create ideological and religious upheaval among them; to spread evil among their men and women; to distance them from Arabic, the language of the Qur'an; to encourage the use of national and social languages; to establish missionary schools; and to weaken the position of the Muslims politically and economically.

I have attempted to prove the fabrication of this book through its historical inaccuracy and doubtful authorship, as I believe that no one else has done so yet. In fact, a book as insignificant as this does not deserve even a second glance, let alone a serious critical study. But from a sense of duty and Amanah, I decided to shed light on the lies contained within it. And Allah knows best the intentions.

7

Let us end this paper with the very perceptive remarks of Prof. Arnold about the Wahhabi movement in "Preaching of Islam":

"At the present day there are two chief factors that make for missionary activity in the Muslim world. The first of these is the revival of

religious life which dates from the Wahhabi reformation at the end of the eighteenth Century; though this new departure has long lost all political significance outside the confines of Najd³⁵, as a religious revival its influence is felt throughout Africa, India and the Malay Archipelago even to the present day, and has given birth to numerous movements which take rank among the most powerful influences in the Islamic world. In the preceding pages it has already been shown how closely connected many of the modern Muslim missions are with this widespread revival: the fervid zeal it has stirred up, the new life it has infused into existing religious institutions, the impetus it has given to theological study and to the organisation of devotional exercises, have all served to awake and keep alive the innate proselytising spirit of Islam.”³⁶

References and Footnotes

1. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Ed. By James Hasting (Edinburgh), 12 : 660-661
2. Surah al-Shoora : 11
3. M. Abu Zahra: Tarikh al-Madhahib Al-Islamiyya, p.532
4. Ibid
5. Abdullah b. Abdul Rahman b. Salih al-Bassam: Ulama Najd Khilal Sitah Quroon, 1 : 51
6. Sheikh Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhab: Kitab al-Tawhid, Bab Al-Shafa'a
7. Majmoo Fatawa Sheikh al-Islam, 1 : 264
8. Kitab al-Tawhid, Bab, Qaul Allah Ta'ala: *Fala Taj'alu Lillahi Andada*
9. Ignaz Goldziher: Muslim Studies, p. 259
10. Ibid, p. 334-335
11. Salahuddin Yusuf: Qabar Parasti, p. 193
12. Sahih Muslim, 2 : 925
13. Goldziher, p. 34
14. Sahih Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Ibn Maja as narrated by 'Aisha (RA)
15. Musnad Ahmad, Sahih Muslim as narrated by 'Aisha (RA)
16. A. J. Arberry: Religion in the Middle East, p. 281-282
17. Masud al-Nadawi: Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhab, p. 199
18. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 10 : 510-511
19. M. al-Nadawi, p.40-41, footnote no. 4
20. Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam, p. 125-126
21. Ibid, p. 356
22. Calvin (1509-1564), French Protestant theologian who said that the destiny of the man is recorded before his birth
23. Ameer Ali, p. 357
24. M. al-Nadawi, p. 215
25. Ahmad b. Hajar Al-Butami: Seikh Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhab, p. 50
26. Dr. Salih bin Abdullah Al-Abood: Aqidah al-Shaikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab al-Salafiyyah 1 : 348
27. Ibid, 1 : 348
28. Ibid, 1 : 465
29. Sheikh Abdul Aziz b. Baz: Majmoo Fatawa, 8 : 98
30. Humphrey's Memoirs, Colonisation Ideal, The English Spy in Islamic Countries
31. Ibid, p. 35
32. Dr. S. A. Al-Abood, 1 : 188
33. Ibid, 1 : 186
34. Humphrey, p. 6
35. It should be noted that this book was first published in 1896 and then reprinted with some additions in 1913. Therefore, it speaks about the conditions prevalent at the time
36. T. W. Arnold: Preaching of Islam, p. 430-431